

## Stepping Stones - Kinlochleven Community Supported Green Health Pathways



Workshop Outputs - May 2024

## **Contents**

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. About Kinlochleven .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Our People &amp; Participants.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Barriers &amp; Opportunities .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Our Community Enablers.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>6. Our Activities (Stepping Stones) .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>7. Provision of Information.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>8. Support Services .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>9. Action Plan .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>10. Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>22</b>

## Introduction

In 2018, the Highland Green Health Partnership was formed and is chaired by the Head of Health Improvement within the NHS Highland Public Health Team. Think Health Think Nature is the work programme of the Highland Green Health Partnership with a vision that states:

*‘By 2030, the natural environment will be valued as essential for the health & wellbeing of the people of Highland. We will work together to support individuals and communities to connect with and enjoy nature, while safeguarding our natural spaces and promoting inclusion’*

The benefits of connecting with nature for our health and wellbeing are well documented and evidenced. Nature-based activities can help to keep people healthier for longer, and are also a valuable self-management resources for those undergoing medical treatment or recovering from illness or injury.

## Stepping Stones

The concept of Stepping Stones originated from work undertaken through the Think Health Think Nature, seeking to develop green prescription pathways from health & social care services into community nature-based activities.

It was recognised that, in some rural areas, there is limited capacity within health and social care services to support individuals into nature-based therapies and that such nature-based services can be hard to sustain due to short term funding cycles and low volunteer turnover.

It was also recognised that there are opportunities to enter nature-based therapies without the need for input from healthcare professionals; that people are benefiting from such activities without the knowledge of their healthcare service; and opportunities exist to enhance and promote such activity at community level.

The stepping stones model is a community-led approach to positive physical and mental wellbeing, determined by suitable local activities (stepping stones) that sit within a shared pool of knowledge. People are encouraged to participate in local activities or self-led activities in nature close to home, through community ‘enablers’.



### **Kinlochleven Workshops**

Workshops were held in Kinlochleven in March 2024, to explore stepping stones as a model for community supported pathways, with funding provided through the Highlands and Islands Climate Hub. Findings from the workshops are presented here together with an action plan for implementation.

Progress will be followed through discussions with the Kinlochleven Community Action Group (CAG), and integrated into the work of the Locality Plan and the Place Plan.

The overarching aim of the project is to *reduce inequalities and increase the wellbeing of the people of Kinlochleven through contact with nature.*



## About Kinlochleven

Kinlochleven is set in the stunning location of the Mamore mountain range at the head of Loch Leven in South Lochaber. It initially developed in the early 1900's when the then North British Aluminium Company harnessed two of the Highlands natural assets – water and hills – to create the Blackwater Reservoir, a hydro-electric plant and the Kinlochleven Aluminium Smelter.

The area has a wealth of natural beauty and greenspace and the famous West Highland Way long- distance walking route passes through it. It is part of the Ben Nevis and Glencoe National Scenic Area (NSA) and the Leven Valley above the village is classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) The community sits at the head of a sea loch, 10 miles inland and isolated from the wider Lochaber area with limited public transport connections.

The Kinlochleven Community Trust manages a network of local paths as well as a community woodland and garden. The surrounding topography can be challenging. Once you leave the settlement the mountains rise steeply and quickly in all directions. There are issues of access for those with reduced mobility.



The community has a GP practice and associated pharmacy, a leisure centre, school and library as well as a supported sheltered and general needs housing for the elderly.

The community is divided in two by the river Leven and in wintertime, the houses in the south of the village remain in the shadow of the Mamore Mountains range for many weeks as the sun fails to rise high enough in the sky to reach over the peaks.

There are issues with overpopulation of deer and the presence of ticks.

**Our People and Participants**

The village is home to around 800 inhabitants and welcomes thousands more visitors every year. In the year 2000, the aluminium smelter on which the village was built around was closed. This had a devastating effect on the community that had been, economically and socially dependent on it. As a result the area ranks poorly on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) for income and employment as shown in **Figure *SIMD ranking as at May 2024:***



There are 50 pupils on the local primary school and 138 pupils enrolled in the High School.

Kinlochleven sits within the wider Lochaber area, south of Fort William and public health profiles for that area show that life expectancy is on a par with the rest of Highland but that male life expectancy is lower than the North and West of Lochaber.

The leading cause of death continues to be heart disease though this number has been declining over the past 20 years.

Drug related hospital admissions from Lochaber have been trending upwards since 2010, as have prescriptions for anxiety and depression.

South Fort William has double the alcohol related hospital admissions in the last 3 years than the north and west (60) and these are higher than the Highland average.

In the past 3 years Lochaber has had 14 deaths by suicide or poisoning of undetermined intent.

The age profile of the region is on a par with the rest of Highland but it is anticipated that the population will decrease in the future with a lower ratio of those of working age against over 65's.

Kinlochleven's population decreased by 17% between 2003 and 2023 (census 2022), the second biggest drop in the Highlands.

A full copy of the report can be found here:

<https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/media/0ijbyfov/adulthealth-lochaber-2023.pdf>

It was highlighted during the workshops that there exist issues around stigma and discrimination within the village and mistrust between different groups.

## **Barriers and Opportunities**

Workshop attendees explored some of the barriers and opportunities around accessing nature based wellbeing initiatives in the community and these are summarised in the following pages under four categories:

- Behavioural
- Physical
- Financial
- Administrative



## Barriers

Behavioural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mistrust/Division in the Community</li><li>• Stigma</li><li>• Low confidence/self-esteem - there is a need for support</li><li>• Local people don't know enough about the heritage and history</li><li>• How do we inform people?</li><li>• How do we get people out of the door to take the first step?</li><li>• Lack of communication between stakeholders</li></ul>
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of outdoor sheltered areas to sit and listen to nature</li><li>• Lack of walkways/drop curbs for wheelchair users</li><li>• Pathways in poor condition</li><li>• Few activities for those with poor mobility</li><li>• Poor weather</li><li>• Midges</li><li>• Lack of daylight in winter</li></ul>
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of funding to sustain activities</li><li>• A reliance on the provision of free services</li><li>• Short term nature of funding</li><li>• Loss of trained staff/training costs</li><li>• A need to set long term or permanent initiatives</li></ul>
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not enough skilled staff to run initiatives - need for training</li><li>• Too few staff on the ground</li><li>• Long waiting times for referrals to mental health services</li><li>• Representation - The same people turn up to consultations</li><li>• People are nervous about form filling and giving out personal information</li><li>• Too much red-tape and paper work for referral pathways</li></ul>

## Opportunities

Behavioural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have good schools to reach younger people and extend to wider family and community</li> <li>• We can connect with local and community led services that are pro-active - avoid crisis rather than follow crisis</li> <li>• Local people may be more trusted than intermediaries</li> <li>• Use existing information channels and networks</li> </ul>
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kinlochleven has plentiful greenspace and beautiful natural and cultural heritage</li> <li>• Has a variety of green and blue health activities on offer or that could be re-established</li> <li>• Opportunities for connecting with nature from home/close to home</li> </ul>
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for better collaboration between groups to strengthen funding applications.</li> <li>• Bottom-up/Community-led applications can be designed to meet community need</li> <li>• Promotion of self-management tools to reduce reliance on external services</li> </ul>
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of skills and resources</li> <li>• Volunteer Recruitment</li> <li>• Joint training for staff and volunteers</li> <li>• Joint promotion and campaigns</li> </ul>

## Who are Our Community Enablers?

Taking the first step into a new activity is often hard and requires support. The Community Enablers are those available in a locality to offer a helping hand to individuals.

Our Community Enablers can signpost to information and support; provide advice using their specialist or local knowledge or can give one to one support.

Signposting opportunities reach the greatest number of people but uptake and overall impact is low. It is also not known how many people will have taken up a new activity based on signposting.

Providing advice alongside signposting has a greater though a lower reach. In Kinlochleven this could be carried out via Community Link workers or similar.

Providing direct support is known to help those who need it most, though reach will be smaller. (See figure below)

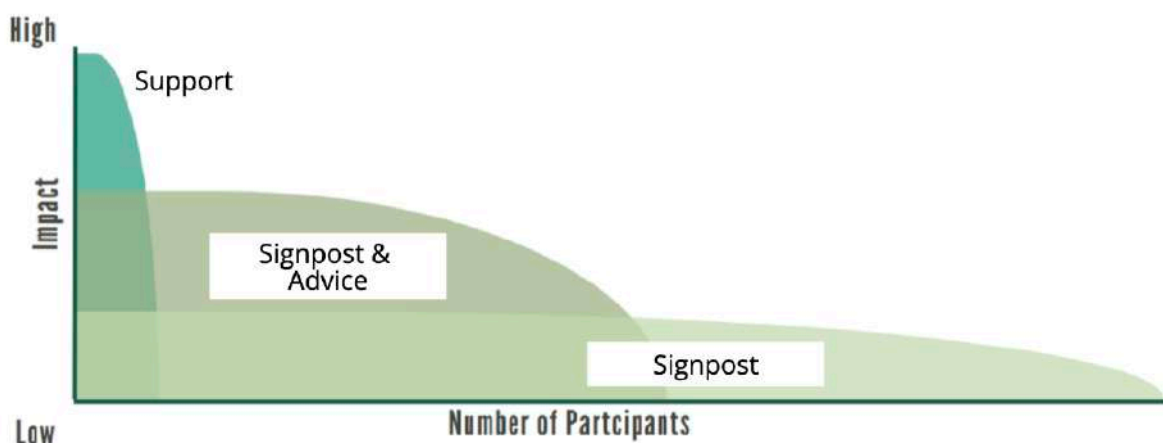


Figure 1: Different Community Pathways into Green Health Activity

Community Enablers Identified during the workshops are listed below by category:

Signpost	Advice	Support
Fire Service Library Staff Leven Centre Staff Schools Churches Co-op Staff Community car scheme staff Community Volunteers Community Council Community councillor Mobile Vet Mobile Bank Mens Shed Members Community groups ? (toddler groups, knit and natter etc.)	GP Pharmacy Ewens Room Councillors Macmillan Support Workers Alzheimers Support Workers Occupational Therapist Physiotherapist District Nurse Toddler group with Cala	Befrienders Peer Support Community car scheme Support Workers Link Workers Active Highla Community Food Coordinator



## **Who Are Our Community Stepping Stones?**

The stepping stones consist of all the community activities that would help an individual maintain good physical, mental and social wellbeing. Each stepping stone should have an awareness of the other activities around them and how to signpost individuals. The idea being that once an individual takes their first step into the network, onwards steps should be easier as activity providers are equipped with the knowledge and information to support that individual.

It was acknowledged during the workshops that some activities are no longer meeting, due to funding issues and it would be nice to try and re-establish these activities.

It was also acknowledged that some people prefer self-led activities rather than group activities and there were also opportunities to create new activities in the village.

## Our Activities

The following activities were identified during the workshops

Activity	Description	Audience	Currently Active?
Community Food Garden	Community food growing garden run by volunteers, open 24/7 to fill in the pantry	Open to all	Yes
Buggy Walks	Formerly set up and supported through Think Nature Health Walks	Parents and infants/ young children	No
Health Walks	Walks of one hour or less for all abilities led by a volunteer walk leader supported through Think Nature Health Walks	Open to all	No
Mens Shed	3 sessions/week at the workshop to socialise and participate on practical projects <a href="https://www.kinlochlevenmensshed.org.uk/">https://www.kinlochlevenmensshed.org.uk/</a>	Men over 18yo	Yes
Wild Swimming	Informal groups	Open to all	yes
KCT Volunteering	Opportunities for volunteering on regular basis or one off at the pantry, community food garden, woodland management and restoration, litter pick etc. Contact KCT. Open to suggestions.	Depends on activity. Enquire at KCT.	yes
Outdoor Mindfulness & Yoga	Local yoga and meditation instructor, wild swimming and mountain hiking guide with weekly online practice, and regular events and retreat. Price vary on the activity <a href="http://www.mountainyogakinlochleven.co.uk/">http://www.mountainyogakinlochleven.co.uk/</a>		yes
John Muir Award	Partnership between the campus, Milada Sethlikova and woodland manager at KCT.	Youth	Yes
Primary Outdoor Learning	Program through the school and in partnership with the woodland manager at KCT	Children	Yes
Art in Nature	Online		
Kinlochlovin	Wednesday after school free craft sessions from 2.45- 4 and 4.15-5.30 at the Leven Centre Adult Pottery 7-9pm at the Kinlochlovin' workshop £5	Youth and adults	Yes, during school terms
Leven Centre Activities	Daily activities Mon-Fri open to members and free access to pool table and kids small playhouse.	Open to all	yes

Activity	Description	Audience	Currently Active?
Knit n Natter	Every Wednesday at 2pm at the Kinlochleven Parish Church	Open to all	Yes
Parent Toddler Group	Weekly meet up at St Paul's church on Mondays 9-30-11-30. Activities with rolling facilitators: Bookbug, Cala etc. and occasional field trip. Suggested donation £1.5 incl. snacks.	Parents & Early Years	yes
E-Bikes	Vulpine starts renting E-bikes at 50% off for Kinlochleven locals <a href="https://www.vulpinebikes.co.uk/">https://www.vulpinebikes.co.uk/</a>		yes
HLH Countryside Ranger	A regional programme of activities in the Lochaber area	Open to All	Yes
HLH Book Bug	Every Wednesday at 11am at the library. Free.	Early years	Yes
HLH Library	Free access, weekly activities for children and Ewen's room Fridays 10.30-12.30 <a href="https://www.facebook.com/KinlochlevenCommunityLibrary">https://www.facebook.com/KinlochlevenCommunityLibrary</a>	Open to all	Yes
Forest Bathing	Darach Social Croft in Lochaber have a trained Forest bathing leader who also is available to develop virtual walks (commissioned).	Open to All	Yes

The following ideas for new activities were suggested during the workshops:

- Orienteering
- Geocaching
- Nature Bingo
- Nature Detectives
- Litter picking campaigns

## **Provision of information**

It was acknowledged during the workshops that a lot was going on but more could be done to raise awareness of the opportunities. Below is a list of suitable information points identified:

- Library
- Letter Box Flyers
- Social Media
- Word of Mouth
- Leven Centre
- Churches
- The Co-op
- GP & Pharmacy
- Schools
- Heatherlee Supported Housing
- Nevis Radio
- Network Events








A wealth of information and self-guided support is available on the Think Health Think Nature Website at:

[www.thinkhealththinknature.scot](http://www.thinkhealththinknature.scot)



## Our available support services:

Some of the local support services identified during the workshops are listed below:

	<p><b>Lochaber Hope</b> are a registered charity in Fort William, offering mental health support and personal development opportunities to everyone in Lochaber <a href="https://www.lochaberhope.org.uk/">https://www.lochaberhope.org.uk/</a></p>
	<p><b>Lochaber Mindfit</b> Peer-to-peer support group for residents of Lochaber with the express purpose of providing emotional support at difficult times for people who have been affected by the issue of anxiety, depression or suicide, whether through their own personal experience or a family member or friend.</p> <p><a href="https://www.highlandmentalwellbeing.scot.nhs.uk/lochaber-mindfit/">https://www.highlandmentalwellbeing.scot.nhs.uk/lochaber-mindfit/</a></p>
	<p><b>Ewen's Room</b> is a mental health and wellbeing charity based in the West Highlands of Scotland. We are passionate about supporting mental health and wellbeing and working to raise awareness and reduce stigma around mental health issues. <a href="https://www.ewensroom.com/">https://www.ewensroom.com/</a></p>
	<p><b>Kinlochlovin</b> supports young people to participate in enhancing activities to promote health and wellbeing, social inclusion and social justice. <a href="https://www.kinlochlovin.org.uk/">https://www.kinlochlovin.org.uk/</a></p>
	<p><b>Highland Mental Wellbeing</b> supports young people to participate in enhancing activities to promote health and wellbeing, social inclusion and social justice. <a href="https://www.highlandmentalwellbeing.scot.nhs.uk/">https://www.highlandmentalwellbeing.scot.nhs.uk/</a></p>
	<p><b>MySelf-Management</b> aims to raise awareness of the difficulties of living with lifelong chronic conditions, help people self-manage their conditions through training, education and fun; giving people the ability to control how they live their lives better and with confidence. <a href="https://www.myself-management.org/">https://www.myself-management.org/</a></p>
	<p><b>MacMillan Cancer Support</b> If you or someone you care about has been diagnosed with cancer, we're here to help. Find out how we support you and get information about different cancer types. <a href="https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support">https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support</a></p>

	<p><b>Chest Heart Stroke</b> Through our Community Healthcare Support Service, we provide support to the one in five people in Scotland living with a chest, heart or stroke condition or Long Covid <a href="https://www.chss.org.uk/services/">https://www.chss.org.uk/services/</a></p>
	<p><b>Connecting Carers</b> work with unpaid Carers every day and have learned a great deal from them. We use this knowledge, and our position as the Highland Carer Centre, to ensure that unpaid Carers in Highland are not caring alone, that they are acknowledged and supported, and that they have access to the information they need to enable them to carry out their caring role. <a href="https://connectingcarers.org.uk/">https://connectingcarers.org.uk/</a></p>
	<p><b>Change Mental Health</b> is a national mental health charity delivering non-clinical, person-centred support to people affected by mental illness in communities across the country. <a href="https://changemh.org/support_areas/highlands/">https://changemh.org/support_areas/highlands/</a></p>
	<p><b>Active Health Project</b> Active Health is a free and confidential one-to-one advice service for people (aged 16+) living in the NHS Highland area who would like to become more active to help their physical and/or mental health. Ask your GP or other healthcare professional to refer you or you can refer yourself direct. <a href="https://www.velocitylove.co.uk/projects/activehealth">https://www.velocitylove.co.uk/projects/activehealth</a></p>
	<p><b>Alzheimers Scotland</b> Help, advice and support for anyone living with Alzheimer's in Scotland including a Dementia Link Worker and a Dementia Cafe in Lochaber <a href="https://www.alzscot.org/findsupport?location[value]=Kinlochleven&amp;location[distance][from]=1609">https://www.alzscot.org/findsupport?location[value]=Kinlochleven&amp;location[distance][from]=1609</a></p>
	<p><b>Highland Hospice</b> Our aim at Highland Hospice is to maximise the quality of people's lives by optimising physical and emotional wellbeing. We provide flexible and person-centred care and support, looking after the whole person, their families and carers. <a href="https://highlandhospice.org/what-we-do/community-services">https://highlandhospice.org/what-we-do/community-services</a></p>
	<p><b>Befrienders Highland</b> are a small voluntary organisation working to improve the lives of people who are <a href="#">experiencing mental ill health</a>; <a href="#">memory loss or dementia</a> and <a href="#">carers</a> . We work with adults (aged 18 and over) who are lonely and isolated, and live within the Highland Region of Scotland. <a href="https://www.befriendershighland.org.uk/">https://www.befriendershighland.org.uk/</a></p>

## Action Plan - Community Supported Green Health Pathways

### Provision of information

Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments
Create a timetable of events & campaigns	Short	KCT	
Home packs for health & wellbeing	Medium	NHS/ HLH/ KCT	Include materials for winter
Shared social media handles	Short	KCT	Dedicated lead to coordinate social media and online messaging across community
Populate noticeboards and information points	Medium	KCT/ KCC	Need funding for printed materials for information points
Develop self-management resources	Medium	NHS	Make links to myself-management resources and dedicated resources through Think Health Think Nature.
Create more information in Gaelic	Medium		

### Stepping Stone Activities

Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments
Re-establish activities such as the health walk groups and community e-bikes	Medium	KCT/ KCC	Potential to develop a community walking plan and link with a health walks coordinator.
Seek opportunities to create new activities	Medium	KCT	Ideas include litter picking campaigns, nature bingo, orienteering, geo caching, nature detecting
Develop progression pathways between activities	Medium	KCT/ NHS	Facilitated through network events and self assessments
Training & Skills development for activity providers	Medium	KCT	Dedicated lead to coordinate social media and online messaging across community

## Community Enablers

Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments
Identify and engage current enablers	Medium	KCT/ NHS	Seek out where relationships already established
Awareness raising and capacity building among community enablers	Medium	NHS	Survey
Create more enabling roles and volunteers within the community	Medium	NHS	Potential to work with Harry Tedstone Highland Hospice.
Awareness raising among NHS staff	Short	NHS	Identify staff in locality and make aware of the project
Engage with GP Community Link Workers and Active Highland project.	Medium	NHS	Make current link workers aware of opportunities available

## Support

Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments
Identify Champions & Peers	Short	KCT	Promote through social or in Blogs etc
Develop Community Network & Wellbeing hub	Longer Term	NHS	Engage with Claire Cameron and the Community Hub project
Seek Funding to Support the delivery and Coordination of the action plan	Longer Term	KCT	
Make links with the Community Action group, Locality Plan and Place planning process to sustain focus.	Longer Term	KCT	Representatives sit on all groups - has been highlighted at CAG May 24
Increased visibility and understanding of available support services.	Medium	KCT/ KCC	Promote list contained here. Look for opportunities to showcase



## Greenspace Enhancement

Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments
Audit of current path network , parking and facilities in terms of accessibility	Short	KCT	
Improved path network for all abilities	Longer Term	CAG/ KCT/ KCC	
Improved signage for walks	Medium	KCT/ KCC	
Covered seating areas	Longer Term	CAG/ KCT/ KCC	
Map of Community Greenspaces	Medium	KCT	

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